



## Outline of the Political Thought of Musa Jarullah Bigiev Expressed in His *Alphabet of Islam*

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### Abstract

The religious freedom resulting from the democratic transformation in Russia in the late 1980s and early 1990s created an opportunity for Muslim people living there to develop their own culture, educational system and administrative structure. Islam has also become one of the four *traditional religions*<sup>1</sup> of Russia. The process of the “Islamic Renaissance”<sup>2</sup> in Russia has led the Muslim community, in particular the Tatars, to look back and take advantage of the historical experience and achievements of Tatar theological thought in order to utilize it in the process of building the identity of Russian Muslims.

In recent years, the most visible element of this process has been an attempt to rethink the concept of Jadidism – the reform movement among Muslims in the Russian Empire at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One of the most important figures of this movement was Musa Jarullah Bigiev, a religious scholar, politician, and writer. His works relate to fields such as Islamic jurisprudence, politics, history, law, and economics. The article aims to outline the political thought of Musa J. Bigiev, as expressed in his most significant work *Alphabet of Islam*, written in 1920.

**Keywords:** Russia, Islam, Ummah, Muslim community, Tatars, Jadidism

**Słowa kluczowe:** Rosja, islam, umma, społeczność muzułmańska, Tatarzy, dżadydyzm

<sup>1</sup> *Traditional religions* are understood as four confessions that bring together the majority of believers in Russia and, at the same time, have the longest tradition in this country. These are: Christian Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. This division was legally sanctioned in the Act *On freedom of conscience and religious associations* in 1997. J. Krukowski, *Konstytucyjne modele stosunków między państwem a Kościołem w Europie*, [http://www.pan-ol.lublin.pl/biul\\_9/art\\_907.htm](http://www.pan-ol.lublin.pl/biul_9/art_907.htm) [access: 10.02.2018].

<sup>2</sup> Some scholars point out that it is worth using the term *legalization of Islam* because, as they argue, Islam has never really disappeared from the life of Russian society; A. Malashenko, *Islam legalizovanny i vozrozhdenyy*, [in:] *Dvadsat let religioznoy Svobody v Rossii*, A. Malashenko, S. Filatov (eds.), Moskva 2009, pp. 245–247.

One of the most significant consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union was the process of the revival of Islam in the post-Soviet territories. Religious freedom was one of the most important aspects of *perestroika* and it can be seen as both a part of the liberalization of the Soviet regime, and, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as an element of democratization.<sup>3</sup> Islam in modern Russia can be divided into traditional and non-traditional. The term “traditional Islam” denotes the groups of Muslims that emerged and built their identity even before the 1917 revolution, and still exist today. The term “non-traditional Islam” refers to those groups of Muslims who appeared in Russia after 1991 and very often proclaim the necessity to reform the Muslim religion.<sup>4</sup> Political changes in the Russian state contributed to the fact that the Muslim nations inhabiting the country began to return to the historical traditions of Islam.<sup>5</sup> This process is most noticeable among the Russian Tatars, in particular those who live in Tatarstan – a republic within the Russian Federation.<sup>6</sup> For centuries, the Tatar national identity was determined by difficult historical experiences<sup>7</sup> and the necessity of living in a Russian milieu and in the Russian state. At the present time Tatarstan is trying to determine what role Islam should play in building Tatar identity, for example in forming the future social elite or in building social relations. In recent years, the most visible element of this process has been the attempt to rethink the concept of Jadidism – the reform movement among Muslims in the Russian Empire at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The conditions and background for the emergence of the idea of modernizing Islam in Russia and its implementation in practice in the nineteenth century had already appeared at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1788, thanks to an initiative of Empress Catherine II, the first centralized Muslim organization was established in Orenburg.<sup>8</sup> This organization took its jurisdiction over 30 million Muslims – citizens of the Russian Empire. Some scholars argue that the actions taken by the tsarist authorities in this matter can be seen as strengthening the status of Islam in the state and the official recognition of religion.<sup>9</sup> This approach is confirmed by the facts. It is

<sup>3</sup> A. Malashenko, *Islamskoe vozrozhdenie v sovremennoy Rossii*, Moskva 1999, pp. 68–70.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, *Islam dlia Rossii*, Moskva 2007, pp. 10–21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> Tatarstan is one of the Russian republics where Muslims live. The population of Tatarstan is 54% Tatar. A. Khurmatullin, *Tatarstan: Islam entwined with nationalism*, [in:] *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism*, R. Dannreuther, L. March (eds.), New York 2011, p. 103.

<sup>7</sup> In 1552 the lands of today’s Tatarstan were incorporated into the Russian Empire by Ivan the Terrible. This event initiated an intensive process of Christianization in the lands of today’s Tatarstan. In 1713 and 1720, Peter the Great issued special decrees aimed at forcible Christianization of the Tatar population and introducing significant economic and political privileges for the baptized people. In 1731 a special “Commission for Baptism of Kazan Muslims, Muslims of Nizhny Novgorod and other foreigners” was created. The main task of this commission was to force the population to officially accept baptism. The response of the Tatar population to the tsarist policy was uprising (1718, 1735, 1739). However, all uprisings were brutally suppressed. R.R. Fakhрутdinov, *Tataria v XVIII v.*, [in:] *Atlas istorii Tatarstana i tatarskogo naroda*, R.G. Fakhрутdinov (ed.), Moskva 1999, pp. 39–40.

<sup>8</sup> R. Gaynutdin, *Islam v sovremennoy Rossii*, Moskva 2004, pp. 35–36.

<sup>9</sup> T.V. Karpenkova, *Dzhadidizm v formirovanii islamskoy politicheskoy kultury*, “Trud i sotsialnye otnosheniia” 2009, no. 12, pp. 80–86.

worth emphasizing that in the Kazan Governorate alone at the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were at least 100 mosques in which Muslim schools were active. Arabic was taught in these schools, as were the basics of the Muslim faith. The decision of Catherine II to establish a Muslim organization also enabled the development of publishing activity among Russian Muslims, and as early as 1802 the first Islamic printing house was opened in Kazan.<sup>10</sup>

The aim of this article is to outline the political thought of Musa Bigiev, based on his book *Alphabet of Islam*. The article also presents Bigiev’s views on social issues (such as women’s rights). It is worth noting that in his works Bigiev also describes issues related to Muslim theology, although this is not a subject of this article. The most important of his works dealing with the problem of Muslim theology are “Evidence for God’s mercy,”<sup>11</sup> “My view on Sharia,”<sup>12</sup> and “Fasting in long days.”<sup>13</sup> In these works Bigiev focuses on such issues as *fiqh*, *ijtihad*, and *taqlid*. His work *Zakat*<sup>14</sup> focuses on the problem of Muslim banking.

## Jadidism – definitions and problems related to the interpretation of the term

Jadidism is still a subject of keen interest for researchers, but it should be noted that a common definition of this concept has not been developed in either Russian or international science, or in religious literature. Researchers of this concept argue about the terminological issue, but also about determining the exact date of appearance of this phenomenon and its most important stages.<sup>15</sup> Up to the 1920s, a certain belief had emerged among the Tatar intellectuals, according to which Jadidism should be understood as a particular type of intellectual and cultural movement, or an intellectual awakening aimed at the approximation of Tatar people to the European culture and social restructuring in accordance with the challenges posed by contemporaneity.<sup>16</sup> The 1930s brought a change in the way Jadidism had been perceived, which was reflected in the conviction that Jadidism was nothing more than a slogan of political struggle of the leading Tatar bourgeoisie against conservatism.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> M. Bigiev, *Dokazatelstva bozhestvennogo miloserdiia*, [in:] *Musa Dzharrullakh Bigiev. Izbrannye trudy*, Kazan 2014, pp. 77–131.

<sup>12</sup> *Idem*, *Moy vzgliad na islamskiy shariat*, [in:] *Musa Dzharrullakh Bigiev. Izbrannye trudy*, Kazan 2014, pp. 132–150.

<sup>13</sup> *Idem*, *Post v dlinnye dni*, <http://www.posledniyprorok.info/post-v-dlinnye-dni> [access: 27.09.2018].

<sup>14</sup> It is worth mentioning that Bigiev’s view on the loan was very liberal. He considered loan as permissible (he referred to the classical period of Islam); *idem*, *Zakyat*, Kazan 2013.

<sup>15</sup> T.V. Karpenkova, *Dvizhenie dzhadidov XIX veka kak sovmeshchenie islama i modernizma*, “Vestnik Ekaterininskogo instituta” 2009, no. 3, pp. 29–32.

<sup>16</sup> D. Iskhakov, *Dzhadidizm*, [in:] *Islam v Srednem Povolshie: Istoriia i sovremennost. Ocherki*, R. Khayrutdinov (ed.), pp. 128–132.

In the Soviet historiography of the 1940s and 1950s, a significantly firmer approach to the concept of Jadidism was adopted. Developed in Tatarstan itself, this approach regarded the phenomenon as a counterrevolutionary and bourgeoisie nationalistic movement under the ideology of Pan-Turkism and nationalism, whereas after the October Revolution, the representatives of Jadidism were branded as counterrevolutionaries and mercenary agents of the intelligence agencies of capitalist countries.<sup>17</sup> In the 1950s, the movement of the intellectuals linked to Jadidism was very often classified as reactionary, directly related to the ideas of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism; however, at the same time, Jadidists were allowed to promote the ideas of Europeanization of the educational system and reformation of religion.<sup>18</sup> The change in the approach towards the understanding of the notion of Jadidism did not occur until the 1970s, when a return to the tradition developed in the years leading up to the 1920s could be truly observed.<sup>19</sup>

Prominent American sovietologist Alexandre Benigsen proposes considering the reform of Islamic education in Russia as a part of a wider phenomenon, the aim of which was a radical reconstruction of the traditional Muslim culture.<sup>20</sup> Other authors use the concept of cultural reform, arguing that the core of Jadidism from the very beginning was the reform of education in the second half of the nineteenth century. Turkish researcher Ahmet Kanlidere believes that Jadidism is a fusion of Islam and modernism, pointing out that the representatives of Jadidism have, under the influence of European thought, developed the need for selective assimilation of Western culture aimed at changing the Muslim mentality with regard to religious thought, education, gender and politics. Kanlidere emphasizes at the same time that religion occupied a central place in the activities of the Tatar reformers.<sup>21</sup>

The most common understanding of the concept of Jadidism presupposes that it is a reformist movement among Russian Muslims aimed at education reform, which later became the basis for political changes among Tatar society. It can be said that the concept itself includes an educational dimension, but also political and ideological ones.<sup>22</sup> Jadidism can be considered as a Russian version of Muslim modernism. As the researchers point out, the reform trends that took place within Russian Islam at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries did not develop in isolation, but were rather closely related to the modernist thought of the Muslim East, based on the achievements of outstanding thinkers making their important contribution to the question of the place of Islam in the changing world.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>20</sup> A. Benigsen, *Musulmane v SSSR*, Paris 1983, pp. 16–18.

<sup>21</sup> A. Kanlidere, *Reform Within Islam. Intellectual Awakening*, [http://www.indiana.edu/~cahist/Readings/2010Fall/Islam\\_and\\_Modernity/Kanlidere\\_Reform\\_within\\_Islam.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~cahist/Readings/2010Fall/Islam_and_Modernity/Kanlidere_Reform_within_Islam.pdf) [access: 20.02.2018].

<sup>22</sup> A. Yuzeev, *Mesto dzhadidizma v tatarskoy obshchestvennoy mysli konca XIX – nachala XX vv.*, [http://www.archive.gov.tatarstan.ru/magazine/go/anonymous/main/?path=mg:/numbers/1999\\_1\\_2/08/08\\_1/](http://www.archive.gov.tatarstan.ru/magazine/go/anonymous/main/?path=mg:/numbers/1999_1_2/08/08_1/) [access: 20.02.2018].

<sup>23</sup> A.A. Gafarov, *Tatarskoe religioznoe reformatorstvo konca XVIII pervoy poloviny XIX vv. v kontekste obshcheislamskoy modernizatsii*, “Uchenye Zapiski Kazanskogo Universiteta. Seriya Gumanitarnye Nauki” 2006, no. 4, p. 170.

## Ismail Gasprinski and the rise of Jadidism

Alexandre Benigsen distinguishes three stages in the formation of Jadidism among Tatar society: religious (theological), cultural, and political reformism. Although these three stages actually followed each other, they also partially overlapped, as in the early twentieth century, when important theological disputes were still underway among the Tatars, while at the same time significant cultural reforms were taking place. At that time, the activities of Muslim politicians associated with this movement also began.<sup>24</sup> The most widespread theory regarding the date of the creation of Jadidism assumes that the beginnings of the formation of this phenomenon were in the 1880s, and related to the activity of Ismail Gasprinski.<sup>25</sup> However, some scholars say that the origins of Jadidism should be linked to the activities of Abu Nasr al-Kursawi<sup>26</sup> and Shigabuddin Mardzhani.<sup>27</sup> Azade A. Rorlich represents this approach, and it is understandable, based on the assumption that the beginnings of this movement are of a theological nature.<sup>28</sup> However, in a situation where most scholars point out that education reform was the beginning of Jadidism, this approach seems doubtful, especially since the postulates proclaimed by Al-Kursawi were of an extremely theological character.

Ismail Gasprinski (1851–1914), a Crimean-Tatar Muslim sociopolitical activist of the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is regarded as the creator of Jadidism. He called for the solidarity of the Turkic nations of Russia, together with a common language and a coherent educational system modeled on European achievements. The name of the movement originates from the Arabic expression “*al-usul al-jadida*,” which means “a new method.”<sup>29</sup> Jadidists criticized religious fanaticism, promoted the replacement of inefficient and obsolete religious schools with secular schools which would include a national element, and called for the development of science and culture, along with academic and cultural centers which would seek to build the unity of the Tatar society. In 1883, Gasprinski began his publishing activity, and it was then that the first issue of the newspaper *Tarjuman*, the first Muslim newspaper published in European Russia, and up to 1905 the only newspaper published solely by Muslims, appeared in Bakhchysarai. The paper enjoyed popularity among the Muslim nations of Russia and it indeed became the national authority of the

<sup>24</sup> D. Iskhakov, *Dzhadidizm...*, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>26</sup> Abu Nasr al-Kursawi (1776–1812) is the first Russian reformer of Islam. He postulated re-opening the gates of *ijtihad*, which in Tatar theological thought was a complete novelty at that time. *Ijtihad* in Muslim law means the individual effort of a Muslim lawyer in interpreting the law and creating new laws that were not included in the Koran or Sunnah. In Sunni Islam, after the final formation of four Muslim schools, it is said that the gates of *ijtihad* had been slammed (around the twelfth century). R.K. Adygamov, *Problema idzhitihada v trudakh tatarskikh bogoslovov (konets XVIII – nachalo XX vv.)*, “Islamskaia mysl: traditsiia i sovremennost. Religiozno-Filozofskiy ezhegodnik” 2016, no. 1, pp. 114–116.

<sup>27</sup> Shigabuddin Mardzhani (1818–1889) – theologian, philosopher, historian, religious reformer. R. Nabiev, *Islam na evropeyskom vostoke. Entsiklopedicheskiy slovar*, Kazan 2004, pp. 186–189.

<sup>28</sup> A.A. Rolich, *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience*, Stanford 2017, pp. 48–64.

<sup>29</sup> A. Yuzeev, *Mesto dzhadidizma...*, *op. cit.*

followers of Jadidism.<sup>30</sup> It was in *Tarjuman* that Gasprinski first proposed the idea of cultural and ethnic unity of all Russian Muslims under the slogan “Unity in thoughts, words, and actions.”<sup>31</sup>

## Musa Bigiev and his *Alphabet of Islam*

Musa Bigiev is considered one of the most outstanding Muslim political activists, thinkers, and religious reformers of the early twentieth century in Russia. He began his education in one of the oldest and most prestigious schools in Kazan, Anapayevskaya Madrasa (religious school). After graduating from high school, he decided to continue his education in Bukhara. It was not a random choice. Following the centuries-old tradition, according to which young Tatars who wished to expand their knowledge in the area of Muslim sciences would go to Bukhara or Samarkand, Bigiev also set out for a journey in Central Asia. Known throughout the world, the madrasas of Bukhara offered education to young people from Muslim countries.<sup>32</sup> Bigiev probably chose Bukhara because at that time the city was inhabited by a large Tatar community (the city had strong commercial ties with the Russian Empire).<sup>33</sup>

Musa Bigiev, however, was not satisfied with the teaching method of the madrasas of Bukhara and decided to take his education into his own hands, choosing his teachers and mentors on his own. During private lessons with the Quran reciter, he studied Arabic and Persian, and, guided by him, explored the pillars of the faith. At the same time, he studied *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy. He read the works of such thinkers as Euclid, Pythagoras, Archimedes, Descartes, and Roger Bacon. During this time, he also translated scientific dissertations in the field of mathematics from Russian into Tatar.<sup>34</sup> He also studied in Turkey, Egypt, Hijaz,<sup>35</sup> India, and Syria.

Bigiev spent approximately five years studying outside the country, including at one of the most prestigious Muslim universities, Al-Azhar in Cairo. Thanks to his studies at this university, he had the opportunity to meet the eminent thinker Muhammad Abduh,<sup>36</sup> and attend his lessons. Bigiev spent a great deal of time at the Egyptian National Library, where he studied the history of the Quran. He also took private

<sup>30</sup> B. Gali, *Edinstvo v iazyke, myслиakh, deystviakh*, “Rodina” 2009, no. 12, p. 122.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> A.J. Frank, *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education, and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige*, Boston 2012, pp. 80–81.

<sup>34</sup> M. Germez, *Musa Dzharullah Bigiev*, Kazan 2010, pp. 19–20.

<sup>35</sup> Hijaz – a historic land in the western part of Saudi Arabia, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba; to the north it borders Jordan.

<sup>36</sup> Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) – Muslim scholar and religious reformer from Egypt. He studied issues related to the reform of Muslim education. A. Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought. From the Prophet to the Present*, Edinburgh 2011, p. 288.

classes with prominent teachers in the area of Islamic studies.<sup>37</sup> After 1910, he became actively involved in political and publishing activity.

The year 1917 brought political turmoil which spread throughout the Russian Empire. Musa Bigiev placed great expectations for changes in the country in the February Revolution, which he greeted with joy and hope. The thinker believed that a political upheaval would bring about an introduction of a democratic order, eliminate inequalities, and the tyranny of the authorities. As he himself noted, “slavery is over and shall never return.”<sup>38</sup> The time of great expectations was, however, quickly over, and a new stage of revolution along with new forms of persecution began. The scholar quickly understood how wrong he was in speaking about the positive consequences of the changes in the country. The new totalitarian regime showed its true face and forced hundreds of Tatar intellectuals to abandon the country just to stay alive.

Nevertheless, Musa Bigiev did not emigrate, but neither did he join the groups fighting the new authority. He did not join the radical opposition, as he was rather closer to the moderate communists. This conduct was judged in different ways. It is worth noting, however, that Bigiev had profound thoughts on political and social matters in the context of the new political order of the country. Contrary to the intellectuals who were leaving, he did not think that the Soviet authorities were a temporary phenomenon. The thinker believed that even with the new authority it would be possible to achieve some benefits for the society, and he was convinced that it was better to stay with the nation rather than go abroad. He was one of the few who, having such convictions, managed to stay in Soviet Russia for many years.<sup>39</sup>

As the new ideological regime in Russia was reinforcing itself, Musa Bigiev decided to become an advocate for Islamic values, and he criticized Marxism. Meeting Vladimir Lenin was an important event for him, after which the intensity of political repressions towards him slightly decreased. Taking advantage of the positive situation, in 1923 Bigiev published in Berlin one of his most prominent works, entitled *Alphabet of Islam*.<sup>40</sup> The open criticism of Marxist ideology that emanated from Bigiev’s work and the fact that the book was edited by the eminent Tatar activist Ayaz Ishaki,<sup>41</sup> contributed to the authorities’ repression of the author. This led to his imprisonment,

<sup>37</sup> M. Germez, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>40</sup> The book was published by the publishing house Kaviani in 5,000 copies. In 2006 the book was published in the Russian Federation by Tatar Book Publishing with a foreword by Aydar Khayrutdinov. Today in the Russian Federation interest in the book is mainly shown among scientists, but the reception of the ideas proclaimed by Bigiev in his book is evident in the various activities undertaken by Russian Muslims: the development of Muslim education, and the activity of Muslim organizations (including female organizations). As early as 2001 a document was published entitled *The Main Provisions of the Social Program of Russian Muslims* (Russia Muftis Council). Many of the ideas (regarding for example social problems, culture, education) contained in this document refer to the intellectual heritage of Musa Bigiev; *osnovnye polozeniiia sotsialnoy programy rossiyskikh musulman*, [http://www.religare.ru/2\\_7723.html#8](http://www.religare.ru/2_7723.html#8) [access: 20.02.2018].

<sup>41</sup> Ayaz Isk haki (1878–1954) – Tatar writer, publicist, socio-political activist; W.Z. Garifullin, A.Z. Mubakzianova, *Etapy publitsisticheskoy deiatelnosti Gaiaza Isksaki*, “Uchenye Zapiski Kazansko-go Universiteta. Serii: Gumanitarnye Nauki” 2014, no. 6, pp. 133–134.

from which he was released thanks to the Muslim activity of the international society, principally, that of the Finnish Muslims.<sup>42</sup> *Alphabet of Islam* is a comprehensive collection of beliefs of its author regarding matters related to the issues of the state and society. Although its full title is *Call to the Muslim Nations Regarding Religious, Moral, Social, and Political Issues and Activities*, the author himself gave it the short title *Alphabet of Islam*. One extremely important element of the work is its introduction, in which the author subjects both the phenomenon of war itself and Marxist doctrine to critical evaluation. As early as the initial paragraphs of the introduction Bigiev writes that the World War “was the result of the civilization’s profound cruelty, its injustice, past sins, social transgressions, such as political ambitions and thirst for power.”<sup>43</sup> According to Bigiev, war “was the realization of horrible visions of the judgment day and it naturally resulted in great chaos and a terrible revolution.”<sup>44</sup> In his opinion, revolution “was prepared according to insane instructions of the enemy of divinity, religiousness, Church and state regime – the pessimistic anarchist, Karl Marx.”<sup>45</sup> The figure of Marx himself is often criticized by Bigiev in *Alphabet of Islam*, principally because it was Marxist ideology that lay at the ideological foundation of the work *Alphabet of Communism*, published by Nikolai Bukharin (together with communist activist Evgeniy Preobrazhensky) in 1919.<sup>46</sup>

Bigiev demonstrates that according to Marx, all the imperfections of the civilization result from the system of private property, while the best and most effective method of removing them is a revolution which would introduce an absolute dictatorship of the proletariat and strip the majority of people of social rights and private property rights. Musa Bigiev calls such thinking childish and emphasizes that, in spite of his genius reflected in the philosophy of the revolution, Karl Marx “showed weakness in the process of the reform of mechanisms and systems of social organization.”<sup>47</sup> At the same time, he points out that “economic turmoil has become fertile ground for very exhilarating and enchanting sciences and agitational activity of such enemies of the state as Karl Marx and similar decadent learned economists.”<sup>48</sup>

An important place in Musa Bigiev’s sociopolitical thought is occupied by the question of Islamic law. In reference to issues related to rights, Bigiev distinguishes two types. The first type of right, which he calls the social right, is one that every person who belongs to a social system and is a fully-fledged member of a given society has at their disposal. The second kind of right is the established or adopted right, whose purpose is to guarantee all the people who form a social system their autonomy and independence. The author of *Alphabet of Islam* identified this as the

<sup>42</sup> A.G. Khayrutdinov, *Posledniy tatarskiy bogoslov. Zhizn i nasledie Musy Dzharrullaha Bigieva*, Kazan 1999, p. 51.

<sup>43</sup> M.D. Bigiev, *Vozzvanie k musulmanskim natsiiam o religioznykh, moralnykh, sotsialnykh i politicheskikh problemakh i deystviakh*, [in:] *Musa Dzharrullakh Bigiev. Izbrannye trudy*, Kazan 2006, p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>46</sup> N. Bukharin, E. Preobrazhenskiy, *Azbuka kommunizma: populiarnoe obiasnenie programy Rossiyskoy kommunisticheskoy partii bolshevikov*, Moskva 1920.

<sup>47</sup> M.D. Bigiev, *Vozzvanie k...*, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 48.

right to independence.<sup>49</sup> It is also worth noting that, according to Bigiev, every person embedded in a particular social system possesses both types of rights, and this is a precondition for the functioning of a person in a society. Both the social right and the right to independence are not mutually exclusive, but rather complement each other. It might be stated that these rights form an inseparable unit and, as Bigiev stresses, “they are intended for the harmonious, ordered construction of a social system and its development.”<sup>50</sup>

The rights to freedom, equality, safety, and life are inextricable elements of the social law. Every member of the society bears these rights, meaning everyone is equal not only in the eyes of the law but also in relation to other people who belong to a given society. The rights to possession and property are a part of the right to independence, namely, the right resulting from the independence of all people and the guarantee of freedom they are entitled to. According to Bigiev, the entire nature and meaning of the provisions of the law are reflected in its ability to level social inequalities, to introduce agreement, and to create harmoniously balanced social structures. Referring to nature, Bigiev argues that, as we see in the natural world, conflicting elements are balanced, as a result of which a natural organism is formed. He believes the question of solving social issues should be approached in the same manner.<sup>51</sup> It can be said that Musa Bigiev was against the elimination of private property, the introduction of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the limits imposed on civil rights. This distinguishes him from communist activists, including the authors of the *Alphabet of Communism*. The difference between Bigiev and Bukharin can be also noticed in the approach to the problem of nationality. In Bukharin’s opinion workers of different nationalities should create one proletariat state and the will of the nations, in his opinion, should be expressed by the workers (who comprise the majority).<sup>52</sup> For Bigiev all Muslims living in Russia were one Muslim nation.

Musa Bigiev points out the important role of reforming the teaching process. He emphasizes that thanks to activities aimed at changes in the academic training process, in the future the number of qualified teachers working at Muslim schools would increase, as would the number of specialists in Muslim religious organizations and mosques. This would, as well, help in the emergence of the new political elite. Bigiev points out a lack of teaching staff among Russian Muslims, and a need for strong, determined Muslim political leaders. The young generation should be raised to become honest, trustworthy, true Muslims who would become valuable members of their societies. In Bigiev’s view, “the interests of humanity and Islam require that, in the same way as it is required by the interests of the state and culture.”<sup>53</sup>

The issue of women’s equality in sociopolitical life was one of the ideological proposals of the representatives of Jadidism at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Tatar thinkers and writers discussed this question, considering it equally

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>52</sup> N. Bukharin, E. Preobrazhenskiy, *Azbuka kommunizma...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 150–153.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*.

important in three matters: the path of the liberation of the Tatar nation from the Russian domination, the reform of Muslim schooling system, and the representation of Muslim society in the national political arena. One element of Musa Bigiev's socio-political concepts is a notion related to the position of women in a social life. In one section of *Alphabet of Islam*, "The Rights and Obligations of Women," Bigiev explains his view on this subject. Right from the introduction, he points out that "Sharia guarantees all the women in all perfection all the human, social, political, religious, and moral rights, which is why women and men are equal in all matters."<sup>54</sup> After those words, Bigiev adds a comment which seems indispensable, as in the view of the Muslim law itself, that what he has written requires clarification. Therefore, the thinker believes that "at first glance, there are certain differences in some aspects. However, they do not concern the rights as such, but rather social status. For example, in the question of the right to inheritance, there are differences in the designation of the share of the inherited property.<sup>55</sup> And this share is not determined by legal capacity or gender inequality, but in accordance with their [men and women's] needs."<sup>56</sup>

Bigiev also addresses the position of women in one of the most important social units, the family. The thinker notes that the high degree of rights granted to women, which would translate into the reinforcement of their dignity, would have a positive effect on the stability of the social system. He also addresses the issue of women's activity in sociopolitical life. As he writes, a woman having full rights would also be fulfilled as a mother and wife. Moreover, Bigiev stresses that attempts to curtail women's rights and restrict women's social activity by limiting their role to that of wives and mothers locked up in their homes, would not bring any benefits for the family. It might be said that in a way Bigiev encourages women to take part in social and even political activities and, importantly, he considers such activity completely appropriate and compliant with the religion. Women's activity in the public arena is an element that guarantees the proper functioning of society.<sup>57</sup> The thinker points out, however, that all the rights of women to participate in sociopolitical life must in no way exert a negative effect on their dignity and honor, and must be consistent with the principles of morality.<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusions

Since the beginning of the 1990s the figure of Musa Bigiev has once again been present among Tatar society. The ideas that Bigiev proclaimed are again contributing to the discussion on the future of Russian Muslims. For several years in Russia, thematic conferences devoted to the socio-political thought of Musa Bigiev have been held,

<sup>54</sup> M.D. Bigiev, *Vozzvanie k...*, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>55</sup> It is worth noting that Muslim inheritance law differs from Roman law or canon law. The testator's will is not the most important. The decisive factor in this matter is the family structure. W. Bar, *O prawie spadkowym w krajach islamskich*, "Studia z Prawa Wyznaniowego" 2006, no. 9, pp. 183–185.

<sup>56</sup> M.D. Bigiev, *Vozzvanie k...*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 108.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*.

resulting in scientific articles and books on the subject.<sup>59</sup> His ideas are the most noticeable in the sphere of development of Muslim education in Russia. In order to create a system of Muslim education that would take into account the changes taking place in the modern world, Russian Muslims are increasingly referring to history. It can be said that contemporary debates on the character of Muslim education can be compared to those from the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In today's Russia, Muslim universities have also added secular subjects to the courses on offer.<sup>60</sup> The issue of Muslim education is also in the interest of the Russian authorities – in 2007 The Fund for Muslim Culture, Science and Education was established.<sup>61</sup> The increase in the number of Muslim women participating in socio-political life is also significant. Women actively take part in the activities of social organizations.<sup>62</sup> It is also worth mentioning that Bigiev's ideas are contributing to the reflection on the future of Islam in Tatarstan. Rafael Hakimow, who coined the term "neo-Jadidism," believes that the revival of Islam in Tatarstan cannot take place without taking into account the ideals proclaimed by ideologues of Jadidism, especially Musa Bigiev. As Hakimow states, "The progress of mankind depends not on market relations, but on morality. Any state dies when moral decay begins. This is a historical law. It is extremely important for us to bring moral norms. For me, Islamization is a return to the morals of the Jadidism."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *II Bigievskie chteniia "Musulmanskaia mysl v XXI veke: edinstvo tradicii i obnoveniia (Materialy II Mezhdynarodnoy nmauchno-obrazovatelnoy konferencii Bigievskie chteniia, Saint Petersburg, 17–20 May 2015 g.)*, Moskva 2016; *Bigievskie chteniia: bogoslavskaia mysl rossiyskikh musulman XIX-nachala XIX vv.*, Moskva 2015.

<sup>60</sup> D.V. Mukhetdinov, *Sistema rossiyskogo islamskogo obrazovaniia: puti razvitiia*, <http://www.id-medina.ru/books/materials/?906> [access: 20.02.2018].

<sup>61</sup> *Fond podderzhki islamsko kultury, nauki i obrazovaniia*, <http://www.islamfund.ru/> [access: 20.02.2018].

<sup>62</sup> A.I. Sattarova, *Musulmanki v sovremennoy sockulturnoy zhizni*, "Vestnik Kazanskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta Kultury i Isskustv," 2014, no. 4, pp. 40–44.

<sup>63</sup> D. Garaev, *Rafael Khakimov: Dzhadidizm eto obraz zhizni naroda*, <http://www.islam-portal.ru/novosti/104/2386/> [access: 20.02.2018].



## The Crimean Tatar Muslim Community: Between Annexed Crimea and Mainland Ukraine

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### Abstract

The aim of this article is the description of the religious, cultural, social, and political situation of the Crimean Tatar Muslims both living in Crimea and outside of the Russia-annexed territory of Crimea in mainland Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> The Crimean Tatar Muslims in mainland Ukraine may be divided into two categories, those who lived there before Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, and those who settled there after – internally displaced persons from Crimea. In the case of the latter, one significant reason behind their migrations is persecution against them on religious grounds. Members of the Islamic communities related to the Salafi version of Islam as well as followers of Hizb ut-Tahrir either fled from the annexed peninsula or were harshly repressed by Russian law enforcement authorities. The mainstream group of the Crimean Tatar Muslims are adherents of Sunni Islam and Hanafi Madhab. The latter is also the main Islamic religious community in Russia, which is recognized as a legitimate form of Islam by the Russian government. However, the Hanafi Crimean Muslims are also being pressured by the authorities in occupied Crimea. The leader of their religious organisation, the Crimean Muftiat, Mufti Emirali Ablayev had to declare his loyalty to the Russian state.

**Keywords:** Crimean Tatar Muslims, Crimean Islam, traditional Islam, Salafi Islam, religious persecution, muftiat, ethno-Islamic policy

**Słowa kluczowe:** krymskotatarscy muzułmanie, islam krymski, islam tradycyjny, islam salaficki, prześladowania religijne, muftiat, polityka etno-islamska

<sup>1</sup> The term “mainland Ukraine” (Ukrainian: *materykova Ukraina*, Russian: *materikovaâ Ukraina*) is used in Ukraine to refer to the territory of the whole of Ukraine without the Crimean peninsula.

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